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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 000593

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CEN A/S TOM SHANNON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/14/2019

TAGS: PGOV PREL KDEM HO

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT ZELAYA

REF: A. TEGUCIGALPA 516
1B. SECSTATE 69222

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Classified By: Classified by Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b & d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a conversation with the Ambassador, Zelaya said he was focused on reaching a negotiated settlement using the channel opened up in New Orleans in conversations with former President Carlos Flores. He said Flores had the clout and influence, which along with the Embassy and USG support, could produce a negotiated settlement. While he said he would continue to support the Arias mediation effort, he does not believe Arias' mediation will result in an agreement, although a deal reached in the Flores/Liberal Party channel could be sealed and signed in San Jose under the Arias umbrella. Zelaya predicted that if a negotiated solution could not be found soon, he believes his supporters will begin to lose faith and seek more radical methods to fight the de facto regime (golpistas). End Summary.

¶2. The Ambassador spoke to President Zelaya on July 14. Zelaya confirmed that he was in Guatemala and was planning to meet with President Colom and have a press conference. He said that he planned to stay in Guatemala until tomorrow and then would return to Nicaragua where he was scheduled to have a meeting with Honduran social sector supporters. He said he was also planning a visit to Mexico soon to seek more support from President Calderon and other Mexican political leaders. He said he was also looking at the possibility of going back to Washington and meeting with Congressional leaders. The Ambassador advised him to seek meetings with both Democrats and Republicans.

¶3. (C) Zelaya said he had in recent days been working the phones in Honduras and had spoken to many key people including military officers, politicians and senior business types. He said that the maquila association in San Pedro, a private sector group he claimed he maintained good relations with, was being helpful. He said he was trying to send a reassuring message that he did not have a radical project (I am not Hugo Chavez!) and insisted he would support the electoral process and turn over power at the end of his mandate on January 27, 2010.

¶4. (C) Zelaya said that the best avenue for a negotiated solution to the Honduran crisis remained the channel he had reopened with former President Carlos Flores - a channel opened prior to the coup with support from the U.S. Embassy (see refs). He said he believed that Flores retained sufficient influence with Micheletti and other members of the de facto regime to possibly negotiate a deal. The Ambassador briefed Zelaya on his own conversations with President Flores yesterday at breakfast and agreed that Flores wanted to be helpful and see whether some kind of agreement could be found. Zelaya said he appreciated all the efforts Washington and the Embassy were doing to find a solution. He said he did not believe that the mediation effort sponsored by President Arias would result in a solution to the Honduran crisis. Zelaya stressed that what could be negotiated internally through Flores and the other Liberal Party leaders, with U.S. support, would be critical. Zelaya said he had great respect for President Arias, and believed his effort provided a "window" to a solution but not the solution itself. Zelaya said that if a deal could be worked out through the Flores/Liberal Party channel, the formal sealing of the agreement and the guarantees provided by the international community (including the U.S.) could happen under the Arias mediation umbrella.

¶5. (C) Zelaya expressed the concern that if the talks dragged out too long, he would begin to lose influence over his core constituents in the social sectors in Honduras. He said that social sector leaders were warning that if he was not able to return within a reasonable timeframe, they planned to boycott the general elections and seek to convene a constituent assembly. Zelaya said that such a development would lead to a break in any possibility of a negotiated solution and could result in civil conflict and violence. Under these

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circumstances, he predicted that he would never return to Honduras but that the country would face a tumultuous future.

He urged the Ambassador to press the two leading Presidential candidates, Liberal Elvin Santos and Nationalist Pepe Lobo, to support an agreement allowing for his negotiated return. He said the newly-elected president would be truly legitimate if the transfer of power was done from the legitimate head of state, and not the de facto regime leader. The Ambassador confirmed that he was in close touch with both Lobo and Santos and was seeking their support for an agreement.

LLORENS